

THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A stabilized aroma-providing component comprising an aroma-providing component in the form of a gas, liquid or powder, and a stabilizing agent of a nucleophile that contains at least one atom having at least one lone pair of electrons, with the stabilizing agent being present with the aroma-providing component in an amount sufficient to chemically interact with compounds in the aroma-providing component to (a) provide increased amounts of desirable compounds that impart desirable flavor or sensory characteristics to the aroma or (b) reduce the amount of undesirable compounds that suppress desirable flavor characteristics or that contribute to or generate undesirable flavor or sensory characteristics in the aroma, wherein the stabilizing agent is present with the aroma-providing component prior to combining the stabilized aroma-providing component with a further component of a food, beverage, food-forming or beverage-forming material and optionally with a liquid to form a product for consumption which product contains an improved or enhanced aroma compared to an unstabilized aroma-providing component.
2. The stabilized aroma-providing component of claim 1, wherein the stabilizing agent is a nucleophile that contains at least one atom of sulfur, nitrogen, oxygen or carbon and is present in an amount of between about 1 and 50,000 ppm.
3. The stabilized aroma-providing component of claim 1, which further comprises one or more additional components such as thiols or compounds that generate thiols so that the additional compound contributes to the flavor or sensory characteristics of the aroma or masks off-flavors in the aroma-providing component, or an antioxidant in an amount sufficient to reduce generation of or scavenge free radicals in the aroma-providing component.
4. The stabilized aroma-providing component of claim 1, wherein the stabilizing agent is SO₂, a sulfite, or a compound or substance that contains or generates a sulfite, a thiol, an amine or an amino acid, and is present in an amount of between about 1 and 20,000 ppm.

5. The stabilized aroma-providing component of claim 1, wherein the stabilizing agent comprises cysteine or glutathione or a salt thereof.

6. The stabilized aroma-providing component of claim 1, wherein the stabilizing agent is an enzyme and is present in an amount sufficient to react with aldehyde groups of compounds associated with the aroma-providing component.

7. The stabilized aroma-providing component of claim 1, which provides tea aroma, malt, Maillard reaction product, or a combination thereof.

8. The stabilized aroma-providing component of claim 1, which provides chocolate or cocoa aroma and wherein the stabilizing agent is present in an amount sufficient to react with some or all of the carbonyl groups present in compounds associated with the chocolate aroma.

9. The stabilized aroma-providing component of claim 1, which provides coffee aroma, wherein the stabilizing agent is present in an amount sufficient to react with some or all of the carbonyl groups present in compounds associated with the coffee aroma to reduce or inhibit pyrrole loss from the coffee aroma, or to reduce or inhibit degradation of thiols in the coffee aroma, thus retaining a significant portion of one or more of the desirable flavor or sensory characteristics of the coffee aroma during at least six months of storage.

10. A foodstuff comprising a first component of a food, beverage, a food-forming component or a beverage-forming component, and a second component of the stabilized aroma-providing component of claim 1 associated with the first component in an amount sufficient to release an aroma that provides desirable flavor or sensory characteristics to the foodstuff, wherein the stabilized aroma-providing component retains the desirable flavor or sensory characteristic of the aroma for at least six months during storage.

11. The foodstuff of claim 10 further comprising a liquid for reconstitution as a beverage prior to consumption.

12. The foodstuff of claim 11 in the form of a solution, suspension, dispersion or slurry formed by combining the liquid with the foodstuff and stabilized aroma-providing component.

13. The foodstuff of claim 12, in the form of a powder obtained by drying the solution, suspension, dispersion or slurry, with the powder being stored until a later time when it is reconstituted for consumption by the addition of a liquid.

14. The foodstuff of claim 10 wherein the stabilizing agent is present in the stabilized aroma-providing component in an amount effective to provide a controlled release of the desirable flavor or sensory characteristics of the aroma over a period of between 3 and 25 minutes after reconstitution.

15. The foodstuff of claim 10, wherein the stabilized aroma-providing component is packaged separately from the foodstuff, is in powder form, is frozen to retard the release of volatiles, is encapsulated, is provided as an emulsion, or is associated with a carrier.